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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:11,100

In 1952, a double feature cost 25 cents, and UFOs were science fiction.

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00:00:11,100 --> 00:00:15,700

And so it wasn't surprising that very few people took the threat seriously when flying

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00:00:15,700 --> 00:00:18,560

saucers showed up in the nation's capital.

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00:00:18,560 --> 00:00:23,320

It was the end of the trail for an unprecedented wave of UFO sightings, in which more than

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00:00:23,320 --> 00:00:27,200

1,500 people had reported seeing the strange craft.

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00:00:27,720 --> 00:00:33,360

In 1952, it was a major turning point in the history of UFOs for the main reason that this

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00:00:33,360 --> 00:00:41,000

was the year that so many UFOs were seen by military interceptor pilots and tracked on radar.

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00:00:41,000 --> 00:00:47,120

Richard Hall believes that the flap of 1952 was among the most significant events in UFO history.

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00:00:47,120 --> 00:00:52,080

When these sightings happened, we were in the midst of the Cold War, which involved a fear

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00:00:52,080 --> 00:00:56,400

that the Soviet Union was going to send bombers over and there would be an atomic war.

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00:00:56,400 --> 00:01:01,040

This was the period when we had bomb shelters and air raid drills and kids at school had

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00:01:01,040 --> 00:01:02,560

to go hide under their desks.

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00:01:02,560 --> 00:01:06,800

And so the immediate reaction was, well, this must be a Soviet Union enterprise.

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00:01:06,800 --> 00:01:09,320

It must be a breakthrough in technology.

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00:01:09,320 --> 00:01:13,480

The United States Air Force launched a top secret investigation as part of the year-old

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00:01:13,480 --> 00:01:14,960

Project Blue Book.

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00:01:14,960 --> 00:01:21,160

Air Technology Center in Dayton, Ohio was put on a high priority project to check this out.

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00:01:21,160 --> 00:01:25,720

And they very quickly learned that this was not anything the Soviet Union had produced.

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00:01:25,720 --> 00:01:29,480

But this led a lot of people immediately to say, well, if it's not from the Soviet Union,

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00:01:29,480 --> 00:01:33,160

it must be from outer space because there was no other explanation for it.

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00:01:33,160 --> 00:01:38,320

The Foreign Technology Division at Wright Field, now Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, was swamped

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00:01:38,320 --> 00:01:40,440

with calls from alarm-dye witnesses.

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00:01:40,440 --> 00:01:45,680

Veteran newspaper reporter Al Chop was hired by the Air Force to manage the flow of information.

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00:01:45,680 --> 00:01:53,000

The policy at that time was to answer to the best of our ability any queries on particular

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00:01:53,000 --> 00:01:54,000

UFO sightings.

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:58,000

And often we could explain what the people saw.

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00:01:58,000 --> 00:02:00,000

Often we could not.

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00:02:00,000 --> 00:02:04,600

Chop estimates that at least 25 percent of the UFOs investigated by the Air Force were

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00:02:04,600 --> 00:02:11,560

verifiable, but undedifiable, including this Montana sighting and the sighting in Utah.

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00:02:11,560 --> 00:02:17,640

In each case, eyewitnesses described multiple bluish-white objects flying in formation at

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00:02:17,640 --> 00:02:21,720

speeds beyond the reach of 1952 technology.

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00:02:21,720 --> 00:02:26,520

The government was interested, but not alarmed by these sightings until two Midsummer's Night

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00:02:26,520 --> 00:02:30,280

Saturdays when they showed up in Washington, D.C.

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00:02:30,280 --> 00:02:35,760

We have UFO sightings that take place at the Washington National Airport on two consecutive

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00:02:35,760 --> 00:02:37,800

Saturday nights.

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00:02:37,800 --> 00:02:38,800

Objects are seen on radar.

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00:02:38,800 --> 00:02:43,320

They're seen visually, not only at Washington National Airport, but Andrews Air Force Base.

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00:02:43,320 --> 00:02:45,880

Everybody who was there saw something.

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00:02:45,880 --> 00:02:50,320

Kevin Randall has one of the largest collections of data, documents, and photographs about

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00:02:50,320 --> 00:02:52,040

the Washington incident.

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00:02:52,040 --> 00:02:56,640

What is interesting is that we have radars in separate locations, also seeing the objects.

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00:02:56,640 --> 00:02:59,760

We have airline pilots seeing them as well.

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00:02:59,760 --> 00:03:01,640

Air Force interceptors are scrambled.

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00:03:01,640 --> 00:03:02,640

They see the objects as well.

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00:03:02,640 --> 00:03:06,560

So we have a wide variety of people seeing these bright bluish-white lights.

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00:03:06,560 --> 00:03:12,080

In 1952, National Airport was Washington's only airport, centrally located and within

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00:03:12,080 --> 00:03:17,000

a few miles of three important intelligence centers, the Pentagon, the White House, and

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:18,000

the Capitol.

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00:03:18,200 --> 00:03:23,000

Al Chop was in the airport radar room the night the UFOs first appeared.

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00:03:23,000 --> 00:03:29,560

We let the press in and they were observing the scope along with the radar operators.

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00:03:29,560 --> 00:03:33,400

We had about four or five radar operators there.

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00:03:33,400 --> 00:03:38,240

The Air Force ordered an immediate scramble at nearby Bowling Air Force Base, but the

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00:03:38,240 --> 00:03:40,200

interceptor jets weren't there.

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00:03:40,200 --> 00:03:42,000

They were in Delaware.

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00:03:42,000 --> 00:03:49,840

The Air Defense Squadron that normally guards the Capitol was assigned to Newcastle, Delaware

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00:03:49,840 --> 00:03:56,280

because they were repairing the runways at Bowling Air Force Base, which seemed unusual

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00:03:56,280 --> 00:04:00,240

for UFOs to visit the Capitol when the jets aren't there.

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00:04:00,240 --> 00:04:05,240

It took over an hour for two F-94s to reach the Capitol.

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00:04:05,480 --> 00:04:08,080

Well, we could see the flight coming in.

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00:04:08,080 --> 00:04:12,640

All of our unknowns disappeared completely from the scope.

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00:04:12,640 --> 00:04:17,400

It was kind of scary, so we let them go back to base.

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00:04:17,400 --> 00:04:24,280

It seemed like the very second that the interceptors left the range of our scope, our UFOs came

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00:04:24,280 --> 00:04:25,280

back.

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00:04:25,280 --> 00:04:30,000

The fighters were recalled and began searching the skies over Washington.

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00:04:30,000 --> 00:04:36,320

One pilot did make visual contact with the UFOs, and this time the objects did not disappear.

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00:04:36,320 --> 00:04:45,120

He flew into this cluster of lights, and then he said, I see them, they're all around me.

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00:04:45,120 --> 00:04:49,200

And he described them as brilliant blue-white lights.

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00:04:49,200 --> 00:04:53,600

And we just looked at each other and couldn't figure out what was going on up there.

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00:04:53,600 --> 00:04:57,560

The objects hovered in the sky until dawn, then disappeared.

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00:04:57,560 --> 00:05:02,000

There were banner headlines in newspapers across the country, recounting the spectacular

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00:05:02,000 --> 00:05:05,080

flyover and speculating about its origin.

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00:05:05,080 --> 00:05:10,880

On July 29, 1952, Major General John A. Samford, Air Force Chief of Intelligence, held this

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00:05:10,880 --> 00:05:13,360

press conference to explain the government's position.

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00:05:13,360 --> 00:05:18,680

I am here to discuss the so-called flying saucers.

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00:05:18,680 --> 00:05:21,920

We have, as of date, come to only one firm conclusion.

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00:05:21,920 --> 00:05:26,040

It was the most heavily attended news conference since World War II.

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00:05:26,040 --> 00:05:30,920

How big it was, and they were under pressure to explain what is this thing that's flying

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00:05:30,920 --> 00:05:34,120

all over the country that we can't identify and have no control over.

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00:05:34,120 --> 00:05:39,840

The official conclusion the Air Force came to was that temperature inversions had caused

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00:05:39,840 --> 00:05:41,400

these sightings.

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00:05:41,400 --> 00:05:45,480

Temperature inversions are when a cool layer of air gets trapped over a warm layer, it

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00:05:45,480 --> 00:05:51,440

forms a sort of atmospheric lens, and the signals are refracted, and you see things flying

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00:05:51,440 --> 00:05:54,600

around where there really is nothing.

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00:05:54,600 --> 00:05:59,600

According to Hall, temperature inversions give only very weak radar returns and are

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00:05:59,600 --> 00:06:05,840

incapable of the kind of acrobatic performance clearly observed on radar at National Airport.

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00:06:05,840 --> 00:06:09,920

And the Air Force came up with the rather lame explanation that they were temperature

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00:06:09,920 --> 00:06:10,920

inversions.

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00:06:10,920 --> 00:06:12,800

This, for some reason, satisfied people.

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00:06:12,800 --> 00:06:15,400

It's hard to imagine why, but it did.

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00:06:15,400 --> 00:06:19,880

It threw people off the track and newsmen, like everybody else, I guess, it was too mind

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00:06:19,880 --> 00:06:23,840

boggling for them to believe it was real.

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00:06:23,920 --> 00:06:28,840

But the incident is indelibly set in the minds of those who experienced it first hand.

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00:06:28,840 --> 00:06:31,480

These were good solid returns.

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00:06:31,480 --> 00:06:38,520

The Air Force radar expert who was present that night stated that they were good solid

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00:06:38,520 --> 00:06:43,880

returns and he thought they were picking up metallic objects.

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00:06:43,880 --> 00:06:50,280

These solid returns for metal objects have never been identified, friend or foe, earthly

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00:06:50,280 --> 00:06:51,920

or extraterrestrial.

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00:06:51,920 --> 00:06:58,520

From Utah in 1952 to the so-called attack on Washington to Mexico City in 1992, these

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00:06:58,520 --> 00:07:02,880

objects remain a tantalizing mystery begging to be solved.

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00:07:02,880 --> 00:07:08,080

But so far, no government has been willing to claim the obsolete 40-year-old technology

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00:07:08,080 --> 00:07:13,640

as its own or to provide another explanation or even to pledge the funds necessary to conduct

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00:07:13,640 --> 00:07:15,560

a comprehensive investigation.

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00:07:15,560 --> 00:07:20,560

Our leaders did not see UFOs as a potential threat and in that way, little has changed

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00:07:20,560 --> 00:07:22,840

since 1952.

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00:07:22,840 --> 00:07:28,800

By assuming the Washington flap of 52 was created by unusual weather conditions, some

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00:07:28,800 --> 00:07:34,120

ufologists believe the U.S. government missed a golden opportunity to make significant contact

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00:07:34,120 --> 00:07:36,800

with extraterrestrial visitors.

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00:07:36,800 --> 00:07:41,600

They wonder, will we be ready the next time other worldly forces choose to make their

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00:07:41,600 --> 00:07:42,520

presence known?